

Dec. 9, 1944

Darling,

This morning we went over to a nearby coal mine to have showers. It is still running, about 1/10 capacity, and a few civilians, mostly old ones, remain to run it. Most of the towns are about 90% rubble. Not as bad as some in Normandy, but nearly so. There is no fraternization - no conversation or social communication with the people by our soldiers. Curfew laws are strict; travel is suspended; schools and courts are closed; publications and meetings abolished. Our martial law must be strict, as all Germany occupied so far is still close to the front. The signs of recent battle are everywhere; the mud, and soot, and rubble are ever present reminders of what it has already cost to be here. There is nothing attractive or gay about this part of Germany now. It is dead, and drab, and dreary.

As regards one point in my discussion of the problems of peace and "retribution" etc., I have formulated some further thoughts as regards who should forfeit their lives to atone for human & war guilt. I think all people whom it can be proved were members of the Gestapo should be shot. Perhaps no single organization since the Inquisition has been guilty of such mass torture and cruelty as this one. Membership alone should be sufficient to show approval of, if not actual participation in, those inhumanly barbarous methods.

Enuf for now, darling. All is as well as it could be, I guess. It's funny. I don't really want to see any more wounded boys, but when I'm idle I fret for work. It's really that I wish I were where I could do some good, for I know that some are getting hurt, but they're going somewhere else for treatment at the moment. I wish I were there, instead.

Lots & lots of love, Fletch. You for me.

H